THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to(d) Subsequent to acceptance of recommendations dated 28.08.2007 of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), *inter-alia,* that there should be no cap on the number of access provider in any service area, 120 new Unified Access Services (UAS) licences have been granted so far. Viewing the present tele-density of around 25, there are ample opportunities abailable to the new telecom licensees. Any such forecast by the existing telecom licensee(s) that new telecom licensees will collapse in three years, appears to be only speculative.

Broadband Connectivity

2187. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development of the country as a knowledge based society;

(b) if so, the steps taken and proposed to be taken by Government thereon;

(c) the details of the broadband subscribers in the country as on 31 st December 2007, State-wise;

(d) whether China is far ahead of our country in broadband connectivity; and

(e) if so, the steps proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Government is very much aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development the country as a knowledge based society.

(b) Some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken by the Government to proliferate broadband in the country are given in Statement-I *(See* below).

(c) There were 30,19,521 broadband subscribers as on 31 st December 2007. State-wise details of Broadband Subscribers are given in Statement-N *(See* below).

(d) As per the information available on Internet, China is ahead of our country in broadband connectivity.

(e) Steps for proliferation of broadband have been summarized in Part (b) above.

Statement-I

Details regarding some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken to proliferate broadband in the country

1. Broadband policy has been announced by the Government during 2004 for accelerated growth of Broadband applications, contributing growth of GDP and enhancement in quality of life through societal applications including tele-education, tele-medicine, e-governance, entertainment as well as employment generation.
2. In order to bring provisioning of broadband connectivity to rural areas under the purview of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), the Indian Telegraph Rules